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ABSTRACT

For U.S. neo-idealists, the 1990s represented a moment to be seized, a time in which the strategies of conflict and confrontation of the Cold War period could be replaced by strategies designed to enhance cooperation among the nation-states. In 2001, the George W. Bush administration found itself in the position of continuing the same Bill Clinton era search for a strategic framework around which to organize U.S. foreign policy. Evidence of these policies can be found in four strategic decisions made by the George W. Bush administration shortly after coming to office: (1) withdrawing from the Kyoto Protocol; (2) desiring to extract the U.S. from the Balkans issue; (3) ending direct negotiations with North Korea; and (4) continuing the 20+ years efforts of the U.S. to broker a deal for peace in the Middle East. Pursuit of a national ballistic missile defense system, opposed in the international community, reinforced the unilateralist policies. The carnage on September 11, 2001, significantly changed the Bush administration's foreign policy and agenda, as the world's only true superpower now had to deal with attacks on its homeland. This literature review on global U.S. relationships seeks to solidify an answer to the question "What do international relations scholars perceive as the role of the United States as a lone superpower in a quasi-unipolar political system?" The review opts to answer the question by examining internal forces and external influences that determine the role of a single superpower through an examination of U.S. foreign policy over the previous 15 years. It singles out the 1999 "The Lonely Superpower" (Samuel Huntington) as the most important article. Lists 18 references. (BT)

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Paul Wayne De Villier

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A SINGLE SUPERPOWER IN A QUASI-UNIPOLAR POLITICAL SYSTEM:

Who Defines the Role of the United States?

By Paul Wayne De Villier, April 11, 2003

INTRODUCTION

No single vision of American Foreign Policy emerged as the dominant theory in the decade immediately after the end of the Cold War. President Clinton's first Director of the Central Intelligence Agency, James Woosely, suggested that rather having to have to contend with a single menace, that of the former United Soviet Socialists Republic (called the dragon), that the United States now faces "a jungle with many poisonous snakes." Instead of the policy of containment for the dragon, the test for the United States Foreign Policy would be how well it would handle all of these snakes. For neo-idealists, the 1990s represented a moment to be seized (Hastedt 2002). It was a time in which the strategies of conflict and confrontation of the cold war period could be replaced by strategies designed to enhance cooperation among the nation-states. For neo-

isolationists, the 1990s provided the United States with a long awaited opportunity to "walk-away" from the influences, both distracting and corrupting, and were able to refocus their priorities on domestic issues at home and a return to the American traditional values.

The Bush Administration immediately found itself in the position of continuing that same "Clinton era" search for a strategic framework around which to organize the foreign policy of the United States. Its initiatives, early on in the game of International Politics, indicated that it may pursue a policy based on unilateralist policies and favoring isolation or a disinvolvement from the prior administration's global solving efforts. Evidence of these policies can be found in these four strategic decisions made by the Bush II Administration shortly after coming to power:

1. withdrawal from the Kyoto Protocol;
2. a desire to extract itself from the Balkans issue;
3. ending direct negations with North Korea; and
4. continuing the twenty plus years efforts of the United States to broker a deal to establish peace in the Middle East.

Our pursuit of a national ballistic missile defense system, even though it was opposed in the international community, reinforced the unilateralist policies and disinvolvement from global solving efforts.

However, the carnage of the terrorist attacks from September 11, 2001, significantly changed the Bush's Administration foreign policy and agenda as the world's only true superpower now had to deal with attacks on its' own homeland. The future was to be viewed through a new set of looking glasses, one that was hostile and anti-western. The foreign policy discussions that occurred prior to the terrorist attacks cannot be altogether dismissed. They have particular merit in that they allowed the administration to focus the thinking on the range of alternative paths open to the United States, and allowing Americans to view, in no uncertain terms, when we made a step in the wrong direction in our conduct as a superpower.

In this literature review conducted on "Global American Relationships", my intent is to try to solidify an answer to the question "What do International Relations (IR) scholars perceive as the role of the United States as a lone superpower in a quasi-unipolar global political system?" I believe that the topic question can be answered by examining internal forces and external influences that determine the role of a single superpower through an examination of the American Foreign Policy and its' evolution over the previous 15 years. I single out the article "The Lonely Superpower" by Samuel Huntington (1999), as most prominent. Dr. Huntington is the Albert J. Weatherhead III University Professor at Harvard University, where he is also Director of the John M. Olin Institute for Strategic Studies and Chairman of the Harvard Academy for International Area

Studies. Dr. Huntington argues in his article that the world is not unipolar, but that the United States were acting as if it were. "This is creating resentment among other [nation] states and [is] creating a situation in which the United States has become a rogue superpower" (Huntington 1999 p. 35).

To do proper justice to a literature review of this topic I find that it would be necessary to divide it into six separate sections:

1. The United States and The World – Strategic Choices;
2. The United States and The World – Regional and Bilateral Relations; (examine our relations with Europe, Latin America, Africa, the Middle East, Russia, China and other developing countries);
3. The Domestic Side of Foreign Policy;
4. The Foreign Policy Making Process;
5. United States International Economic Strategy; and
6. United States Arms Control and Military Strategy.

It is only by dissecting the role of a superpower through its' foreign policy can a final conclusion be made with some validity as to who are the internal and external actors that determine the superpower's role in the world today.

In conducting this literature review, I looked at articles that spanned our last three American Presidents, at intervals of those articles relevant today, one year ago, five years ago, and between ten and fifteen years ago. I fully realize that

any one of the six sections that I chose for this review could in itself become a complete and viable topic for exploration in its' own right. Presented with an opportunity to delve into the recent past, review scholars recommendations and predictions, and to examine the correctness of their ideas in light of today's world, this provided me with the knowledge of their prior work product. However, for the sake of brevity, I will only be listing and summarizing those articles, which fall in the range of topic number-one listed above.

THE UNITED STATES AND THE WORLD: STRATEGIC CHOICES

Is America on the brink of the establishment of a "New American Empire" the likes of which neither the world nor we in America have ever seen before? In recent years America has had an aversion to institutionalizing democracy in a way which suits our American traditional values and our present system of government, and transplanting that democracy to countries around the world. [This will be discussed in an article within this literature review.] National Security Advisor Condolezza Rice recently stated " the United States does not have territorial ambition, nor ambitions to control other people" (Tolson 2003).

What then is the role of America in the world of today? What are our relationships with other countries supposed to include and what are our global responsibilities? What are our economic duties to American citizens at home? How exactly is foreign policy made and who executes it? Finally, What is the role

of the military, and our strategies on arms controls as the lone superpower in the quasi-unipolar world of today? What policy or policies of International Relations will the United States choose? Among our political administration's choices fall the following theories/plans of action: empire building, exceptionalism, unilateralism, the American System, expansionism, progressive imperialism, liberal internationalism, containment, regulation, realism, marxism, pluralism or neo-conservatism? This listing is by no means intended to be all-inclusive. It is only to show my primary reader that there are a multitude of "paths of policy and action" that our lone superpower may pick from. If America chooses, it may pick more than one, a combination of two or more, or settle in as we did prior to World War I, and choose isolationism. If the choice does not work, we are free to choose again. However, as discovered in the following articles regarding recommendations on which policy should be chosen and reasons from its author, choosing a policy is very easy to do. Implementation, including all the necessary resources, and the daily occurrence of events in our global community, make change vital and necessary.

In "Politics of Nations", Chapter 11, The Balance of Power, Morgenthau (1948), is quoted as saying

> The international balance of power is only a particular manifestation of a general social principle to which all societies composed of a

> number of autonomous units owe the autonomy of their component parts; that the balance of power and policies aiming at its preservation are not only inevitable, but are an essential stabilizing factor in a society of sovereign nations; and that the instability of the international balance of power is due not to the faultiness of the principle but to the particular conditions under which the principle must operate in a society of sovereign nations.

He believes that the concept of " equilibrium" as a viable synonym for the word "balance" is correctly used in the study of social sciences. However, he also believes that two assumptions become base at the foundation of all such equilibriums stating

> First, that the elements to be balanced are necessary for society or are entitled to exists and, second, that without a state of equilibrium among them one element will gain ascendancy over the others, encroach upon their interests and rights, and may ultimately destroy them.

Morgenthau, as a realist, quotes and agrees with James Madison in Federalist 51 that there exists a need for both social and power equilibrium and agrees with one of John Randolph's speech made at the Constitutional Convention that "…power alone can limit power" (Randolph 1778).

Tonelson (1992) believes that the "America First" approach to foreign policy should be even the slightest bit controversial, speaks in volumes about what is wrong with America today. He states that the main criticisms of American Firstism are well known by now. He believes it to be the same 1930s era isolationism and protectionism in modern guise, fueled by a recession induced mood of national surliness and by demagogues on both the left and right. "It is xenophobic, nativist and even racist. It ignores contemporary realities such as global economic interdependence, and transnational problems such as pollution and migration" (Tonelson 1992). At best, we demonstrate that once again the American peoples' all too human determination to wish the problems of the world away and to be left alone. At worst, we demonstrate selfishness and a failure to accept our historic responsibilities. Friction and conflict are considered to be the norm in the world affairs of this present day. Most nations should put their trust in interdependence, integration, and cooperation among all nation-states to have any hope of global peace and harmony (Tonelson 1992).

The Reagan victory school and the broader peace-through-strength perspectives are, however, misleading and incomplete (Ikenberry and Devdney 1992). Their interpretation of events in the 1980s, and in their understanding of deeper forces that led to the end of the Cold War falls into both of the above categories. Reagan and his administration's initiatives played a different and more

complicated role in encouraging Soviet change than the Reagan victory school asserts. (Ikenberry et al) states

> For every hardening, there was a softening: Reagan's rhetoric of the Evil Empire was matched by his vigorous anti-nuclearism; the military buildup in the West was matched by the resurgence of a large popular peace movement; and the Reagan's Doctrine's toughening of containment was matched by major deviations from containment in the East-West economic relations.

Over the longer term, the strength that was embodied in "containment" was equally matched by the mutual weakness in the face of nuclear weapons and efforts to engage the USSR were as important as efforts to contain it. The trends that were established and became deep rooted during the Cold War demonstrates the considerable support in the West today for reform in the post-Soviet transition required today. The trends expose as one-sided and self-serving for the New Right's attempt to take credit for the success of forces, that in truth, they opposed. "In the end, Reagan partisans have been far more successful in claiming victory in the Cold War than they were in achieving it" (Ikenberry et al).

Baret (1992) revisits the Lippman versus Kennan debates that occurred in 1947 because the United States stands on the threshold of another series of fateful choices; similar to the choices it made at the beginning of the Cold War with the

USSR. He also agrees with Tonelson (1992) and asks the question" how much did U.S. Cold War Policy have to do with what happened in the USSR" (Baret 1992)? The arms race increased both the risk, and the perception of a risk of war between the then superpowers. The Cold War ended because internal failures and disappointments forced fundamental changes in the Soviet System. The disintegration of the Soviet System came about exactly in the way that Keenan had predicted about 40 years prior to its occurrence. Lippman convinced the Truman Administration to launch its' containment policy around the USSR, specifically in Turkey and in Greece, rather than focusing it on the strategic middle, the USSR. This policy pushed the Truman Administration to think that a military rather than a diplomatic strategy would be best served for dealing with the Soviet Union and its threat to Germany (Baret 1992). The last strain on the Truman Administration was the deep concern about the increasing volatility of the public opinion of Americans. Americans were demanding demobilization after World War II and appeared to want no further involvement in foreign affairs. Both Lippmann and Keenan shared the view that the United States was the custodian and guardian of Western Civilization in a world in which "the highest achievements of that civilization had barely survived the savage assault of a virulent, deformed populism" (Baret 1992). This new challenge of Soviet Communism would force the United States to exercise its leadership role in the world.

In Burton Pines' article (1991), aimed directly at conservatives, he offered his new and coherent American Foreign Policy, which he believed the Bush I Administration had yet to offer. He constructed his policy based on the following ten principles:

1. Foreign policy **is** domestic policy.
2. Morality should **not** drive foreign policy.
3. Ambitious foreign policy **poses** domestic dangers.
4. **Deal** with world reality.
5. Specific policies for specific policies **should** replace global foreign policy.
6. **Rank** the threats to America.
7. Mexico, Russia, Israel, Japan and China merit **special** treatment.
8. **Expand** opportunities for Americans.
9. **Give no** nation or organization a **veto** over American actions.
10. Stability is **not** the goal of foreign policy.

His last principle contrasts with Morgenthau's (1948) view on "balance of power" and "equilibrium."

Stanley Hoffman (1994), a professor at the Center for European Studies at Harvard University, conducted a symposium on "What Should American Foreign Policy Should Be?" He asked of the symposium participants to address the

following three problems that he viewed as paramount before an effective foreign policy could be established:

1. The problem of Russia
2. The large, looming number of conflicts, both potential and actual, and
3. The kind of major steering committee, composed of global and regional actors, who would try to agree (even informally) on the criteria for justifying external interventions

The responses received at the symposium from the eight invited participants range from isolationism as purported by Tonelson (1992) to advice for conservatives by Pines (1991) to excessive involvement in world affairs as advocated by Henry Kissinger in the mid 1970s (Hoffman 1995).

Jonathan Clarke (1994) believed that in order for the United States to be the "Police for the New World Order," the level of defense spending must be increased by approximately $200 billion per year. He acknowledges that there are threats that posed serious dangers to the United States in its current role, but we should not bankrupt our domestic policy in order to become the "new policeman." He makes a final statement regarding what today we call "rogue states" by saying

> Foreign policy by label or bumper sticker is not recommended...The United States needs to put much more effort into their understanding these nations. Usually they are small, backward countries. America

> should teat them as such, using patient, low-key diplomacy, not elevating them into Hitlers or Stalins.

In Doug Bandow's article (1994), he advocated that we keep both American troops and American money at home. In his view, our federal government's role is not to

> conduct glorious utopian crusades around the globe…or to provide a pot of cash for the secretary of state to pass out to friendly regimes to increase United States influence abroad…money and lives of the American people are not there for policymakers…to expend for purposes other than defending the American community.

The Douglas Dillon Professor of the Civilization of France and Chair of the Center for European Studies at Harvard University, Dr. Stanley Hoffman (1995), states that "Communism is dead, but is the other great postwar ideology, liberal internationalism, also dying?" He offers as his evidence for the decline, speeches by National Security Advisor Anthony Lake, that Americans have been reminded again "liberal democratic internationalism or Wilsonianism" has been the most important and distinctive contribution of the United States to the international history of the twentieth century. Lake presented the Clinton Administration's foreign policy as a "pragmatic Wilsonianism." He explained to the American public, who seemed to be becoming deeply ambivalent about foreign policy, that it

aims at expanding democracy and free trade, "and defending democracy from its foes, at quarantining repressive and pariah states and at protecting and promoting human rights" (Hoffman 1995)

In "New Realism," Ronald Steel (1997) tells us that the most troublesome of all concepts are the ones we take for granted. The concept of " national security" is one of those issues that becomes hard to define, hard to view as an external reality, but is given light when seen as a "social construct." He believes that "security is...a feeling and a process...an abstraction. We are all vulnerable in ways we cannot imagine and cannot fully protect ourselves against....Let us put security...as a means to an end...not an end in itself" (Steel 1997). Americans must accept the fact that national security **is** an attitude, **not** a policy.

The Director of the Brookings Foreign Policy Studies Program, Dr. Richard N. Haas (1997), details in his article the foreign policy challenges for the Second Clinton Administration. He believes that the most significant foreign policy challenge facing the second Clinton Administration involved relations between the United States and the other great powers of the era: China, Russia, Japan, Germany and Western Europe. During President Clinton's first term of office, the status of each of these powers was in decline and deteriorated. This is not to blame President Clinton for his foreign policy in his first term, although it would be fair

to say that "American inconsistency, unilateralism and…a lack of regular high-level attention by policy-makers…contribute to this development" (Haas 1997).

The president would have to spend a great deal of his political capital to work with Congress in order to provide foreign aid (approximately $300 billion), which Haas believes would be needed for the United States to continue its world leadership role. He, as several others referenced in this section on foreign policy, believed that foreign policy begins at home and that the United States must move from a policy of "**containment to one of regulation**."

President Clinton's Secretary of State Madeleine Albright, in her first official trip as the new Secretary of State, delivered a speech at Rice University, Houston, Texas, on February 7, 1997. Her topic was "Diplomacy and Economics, How to Build a Bipartisan Foreign Policy." She chose to give the speech in the adopted hometown of former President George Bush I, and the state from which our next president would call home, President George Bush II. Her visit came about a week after President Clinton gave his State of the Union Address to Congress as she quoted him by saying " To prepare America for the 21st century, we must master the forces of change in the world and keep American leadership strong and sure for an uncharted time" (Clinton 1997). In her words

> …Force and diplomacy must complement and reinforce each other. For their will be many occasions, in many places, where we will rely

on diplomacy to protect our interests. And we will expect our diplomats to defend those interests with skill, knowledge and spine." "Over the past four years, the Department of State has cut more than 2,000 employees, closed more than 30 overseas posts and slashed foreign assistance by almost one-third.

Her intent in this speech was a financial appeal to a Republican controlled Congress to add more money to the State Department Budget in order to create more jobs in her department; to continue to ensure that weapons of mass destruction are reduced in the under-developed countries; to provide our payments to the institutions who have in our name acted to keep peace in conflict ridden areas; to maintain sanctions against rogue states; to creating new markets; to protecting the environment; to caring for refugees, and for addressing other problems around the globe (Albright 1997). She and other diplomats would continue their trips to "The Hill" to advise Congress on world affairs and to ask for additional money in their budget. She asked that partisan politics be placed aside and that as Americans, we work together for the common good of America. In her closing, she said " I well understand, as I undertake my new job, that there is no certain formula for ensuring public support for American engagement overseas...The reality is that Americans have always been ambivalent about activism abroad" (Albright 1997)

In "Different Drummers, Same Drum," Andrew Bacevich (2001) informed us that President Bush put Baghdad on notice when he ordered strategic target attacks in Iraq, on February 16, 2001. This incident, taken in conjunction with earlier indicators, suggested that President Bush was staying the course and following carefully the precedents established by the former administration in regards to foreign policy. That story is one of continuity, not of change. However, the adoption of the same Iraq policy as President Clinton was vehemently denied about three weeks later in response to a Washington Times editorial. Bacevich states that

> Bush and Clinton fit comfortably within the foreign policy consensus that prevails today in all quarters to the Left of the tattered remnant of hard-core isolationists and to the Right of those few beleaguered radicals still pining for the glory days of the 1960s…It renders moot old distinctions between realists and idealists, nationalists and internationalists, and transcends party affiliation and …labels such as liberal and conservative.

President Clinton established a consensus of opinion on foreign policy that was adopted in 2001 by the new Bush Administration. This policy may be the lasting legacy of the Clinton presidency. Those five elements he established, per Bacevich (2001), and continued through September 11, 2001 are:

1. America is the historical vanguard and that it alone, comprehended and manifested history's purpose, That History **is** Freedom "achieved through the spread of democratic capitalism, and embodied in the American Way of Life."
2. The promise of openness and integration are two key elements to the establishment of a sound foreign policy for a superpower. Openness with our allies and our enemies about our policies and consequences. When combined with the information revolution, globalization is accelerating the process of international integration.
3. The duality of openness is a two-edged sword. In the absence of any viable alternative to democratic capitalism, America's continual promotion of that ideal will incite resistance. Those who oppose the duality of openness fall into one of three categories:
    a. Those who advance an altogether different view of history's purpose and their own distinctiveness of truth, i.e. adherents of radical Islam.
    b. Those who reject universalism of any form and hang on with all of their might to their own particular vision.
    c. Those various parties who simply intend on grabbing their share of the loot.

4. The necessity of military supremacy is required to halt and dispose of all the unconventional and invisible threats of new technologies and new hatreds. The might and use of military force, and of that force being a superior one, are imperative.
5. The primacy of American leadership is a claim to which both Clinton and Bush have clung to in their view for retention of America's status as a superpower. There exists no alternative to United States leadership and President Clinton even once referred to it as "assertive multilateralism."

When President Bush's father was in the White House, the Pentagon prepared a classified document suggesting that something approximating global hegemony offered a useful principle around which to organize strategy after the Cold War. War erupted in the Bush Camp, the author fired; eight years later the author was back in the Pentagon as Deputy Secretary of Defense (Bacevich 2001).

Samuel Huntington (1999), in his article titled "The Lonely Superpower," informs us that contemporary politics does not fit into a unipolar system, nor a bipolar system, nor a multipolar system. It is instead a hybrid, a uni-multipolar system containing one superpower and several major powers. Those major powers would include China, France, Germany, Great Britain, Japan and Russia. The United States would, of course, prefer the unipolar system for maintenance of their

dominant position. This is not what the other major powers have in mind. None of the principal power holders in the world today are happy with the status quo either. In the eyes of many nation-states, America is considered to be a bully and a "rogue superpower" (Huntington 1999). Most of the world also does not want America to act like it is the Sheriff and play "policeman for the world." That is in agreement with keeping our American dollars and American troops at home, previously referenced (Clarke 1994). Huntington concludes his article by stating

> In the multipolar world of the 21st century, the major powers will inevitably compete, clash and coalesce with each other in various permutations and combinations. Such a world, however, will lack the tension and conflict between the superpower and the major regional powers that are the defining characteristic of a uni-multipolar world. For that reason, the United States could find life as a major power in a multipolar world less demanding, less contentious, and more rewarding than it was as the world's only superpower.

CONCLUSIONS

After my review of the above referenced articles it appears that there is no overwhelming support for any major International Relations Theory as a role for the American superpower; no right or wrong way to fill the global role as global humanitarian superpower, and no consensus on whether or not the United States

should strike out on its' own, advancing the premise of American Firstism or as a rogue superpower. However, there does appear to be a major trend across the entire spectrum of articles reviewed. IR scholars appear to agree to a major trend evolving that the single superpower's role in the world today requires that foreign policy have a characteristics similar to that of our Constitution – that is it must contain "some form of elasticity"; and that we abandon the hard, rigid, defined policy established immediately after World War II. Secondly, there appears to be some consensus that no matter what, the United States will look after its own interests first, promote democratic capitalism where it can, and foster the notion of freedom and democratic rule for all nation states.

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